

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

October 1-October 15, 2010

HEALTH

National Immunization Days for Polio Eradication:

New cases of polio have fallen by 99 percent globally in the past two decades, but Afghanistan remains one of the world's four polio-endemic countries. To protect its young citizens against the deadly disease, Afghanistan holds Polio National Immunization Days (NIDs) four times per year.

On October 3, Afghanistan inaugurated a three-day polio NIDs campaign at the Khair Khana Hospital in Kabul. Around the country, more than 55,000 vaccinators dispensed both polio drops and



National Immunization Days vaccinators protect young children against polio.
PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

albendazol (deworming) tablets, reaching 7.8 million children under the age of six. This was the first time that albendazol was included and 4.7 million children between the ages of two and five years received the tablets.

The disease remains a stubborn problem, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the country where a poor security environment impedes polio vaccinators and there is cross-border importation of the virus with Pakistan. In between NIDs, smaller campaigns are conducted in areas where new cases have been found. USAID support, along with that of the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and other international donors, is credited with helping the Afghan Ministry of Public Health keep the number of new polio cases at low levels for the past five years.



U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry tours the 2010 International Agricultural Fair.
PHOTO: Daniel Wilkinson

AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Fair Showcases Afghanistan's Bounty: From October 6 to 8, thousands of visitors

Bounty: From October 6 to 8, thousands of visitors from Afghanistan and around the world converged on Badam Bagh Farm in Kabul to attend the 2010 International Agricultural Fair. The AgFair hosted 136 Afghan and 40 international venders, showcasing the country's crown jewels of agriculture, such as grapes, pomegranates, dried fruits, nuts, cashmere, and other high value crops and agricultural services.

U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, Minister Asif Rahimi and Deputy Minister Saleem Kunduzi of the

Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) celebrated the opening of the fair. "Afghanistan's progress in the agriculture sector is helping lead this proud nation along the pathway to development and self sufficiency by helping feed the Afghan people, opening

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markets, and stimulating economic growth and investment opportunities," lauded Ambassador Eikenberry.

USAID, in collaboration with MAIL, has sponsored 13 Agricultural Fairs since 2007 to encourage trade and generate business opportunities in the agricultural industry. These fairs help participants forge new business relationships in Afghanistan's growing agriculture sector. They also bring together hundreds of producers, buyers, packagers, cold storage technology companies, equipment vendors, international representatives, and government agencies to facilitate stronger business linkages and partnerships. Seminars, presentations, and demonstrations will share knowledge and best practices for increasing agricultural production.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Thousands Take Part in Global Hand Washing Day Celebration: Many common illnesses can be prevented by increasing the practice of hand washing. To promote better health and hygiene, the Afghan Ministry of Public Health and the international community led celebrations of Global Hand Washing Day across the country on October 15. USAID's Afghan Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation (SWSS) project and the Afghan Government supported the day in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Laghman, Logar, Nangarhar, and Takhar provinces by providing soap and water at community events.



Schoolgirls show their hands after washing them with soap and water.

PHOTO: USAID/SWSS

Based on annual statistics, diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections are responsible for the deaths of more than 67,500 children under the age of five in Afghanistan. One of SWSS's key objectives is to promote improved hygiene practices and reduce diarrheal diseases within communities. To achieve this, SWSS works with communities to improve key hygiene behaviors such as hand washing with soap, safe water transport and storage, and the use of improved pit latrines.

This year's theme of Global Hand Washing Day, "more than just a day," aimed to establish hand washing with soap as a life-long and life-saving habit. In a gathering of thousands in Badakhshan province, the Provincial Public Health Director Abdul Mobin Jalali said, "The celebration of hand washing in schools is of great importance. Through this gathering, approximately 4,000 students and families are receiving important hygiene messages." He then asked the attendees to make hand washing with soap a regular habit. While washing his hands, student participant Abdul Wakil agreed, saying, "Washing our hands with water and soap can reduce disease and the cost of soap is less than 10 Afghanis (\$0.20)."

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Energy Monitoring and Control System Training:

Bringing electricity to Afghans in a more efficient manner is a joint goal of the U.S. and Afghan governments. Recently, Mr. Gulla Jan Hairan, chief operating officer of Afghanistan's public/private energy corporation Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), and a USAID energy officer participated in the successful testing of a centralized energy monitoring and control system. The system will soon be implemented in Kabul to provide supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) for electricity. The session occurred in Istanbul, where Afghan engineers have been undergoing USAID-sponsored training for six months under the guidance of the Infrastructure and Rehabilitation Program.



DABS engineers will control electricity for the North East Power System through this SCADA master system display.

PHOTO: USAID/IRP

The SCADA system will allow DABS to control the way that energy is generated, transmitted, and controlled in the North East Power System, increasing the efficiency and safety of power plants and substations that deliver electricity to residences and businesses. "This SCADA system will be a tremendous benefit to DABS and our ability to serve our customers," Mr. Hairan said. "There is potential to add features that will help us to operate new stations and synchronize our operations with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the future."



CSO representatives practice advocating for their cause during a simulation exercise. PHOTO: USAID/APAP

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Afghan Civil Society Organizations Learn to Advocate in Parliament: Around the world, civil society organizations (CSOs) are in a unique position to advocate on behalf of people whose voices would otherwise go unheard. They can play an important role in shaping a national agenda that responds to people's needs, and this often involves CSO representatives taking their message straight to a nation's politicians. However, in Afghanistan, civil society participation in the law-making process remains rare and few CSOs know that they can use legislative advocacy to affect the crafting of public policy.

To help Afghan CSOs boost their influence, the Afghanistan Parliamentary Institute, supported by the USAID-funded Afghanistan Parliamentary Assistance Project (APAP), provided four days of legislative advocacy training in late September. The 28 participants from 15 organizations learned different legislative advocacy tools and techniques. A course

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highlight was a simulated committee public hearing on an actual bill pending in parliament. With insightful testimony from "CSO representatives" as well as thoughtful questions from "MPs," the exercise gave participants a glimpse into the conduct of committee business and how they can provide input to the legislative process.

Speaking afterwards, Mr. Zabiullah Bahar from the Center for Youth Affairs believed the exercise had built the capacity and confidence of CSOs to connect with parliamentarians. "The knowledge that CSOs can participate in committee hearings will diminish the barriers between CSOs and parliament," he said. Another participant, Ms. Muqadas Atalwala from the Afghanistan Women's Educational Center, said the training had opened her eyes to a new role her organization could play on the national stage. "We now know that CSOs should be involved in the law-making process. We learned from the course that it is important to bring public opinion to the attention of parliament."

Judicial Training for a Fledgling Democracy:

Twenty-five judges from Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan, and Sari Pul provinces recently attended a judicial training program held in collaboration with the Afghanistan Supreme Court and USAID's Afghanistan Rule of Law Stabilization Program — Formal Component. For many judges of the war-torn country, it was the first such training of its kind that they had ever attended.

The 14-day training session included theoretical and practical sessions on topics such as civil law and procedure, judicial ethics, and fair trial principles. At



Judges refresh their knowledge at a USAID judicial training session.

PHOTO: USAID/RLS-F

the end of the training, the participants left feeling that they could rely on the invaluable skills and knowledge learned during the sessions to handle cases, rather than basing decisions on informal information-gathering. One participant, Judge Zabihullah, commented that the training refreshed long-forgotten knowledge he had acquired during his academic tenure.

The impact of judicial training efforts by the Afghanistan Supreme Court and USAID continue to grow. According to judges that attended the training program, not only do they use skills and knowledge learned in the training in their daily work, but they also spread this newly acquired knowledge to their colleagues. In addition, the reputation of the training has prompted other judges to request and seek out similar USAID judicial training programs in their own regions. The Afghanistan Rule of Law Stabilization Program — Formal Component plans to replicate this highly successful program in the eastern province of Nangarhar.

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STABILIZATION

Turning on the Lights in Muqur: Residents of Muqur in Badghis Province are enjoying a safer bazaar with increased lighting thanks to their local government and USAID. The District Governor of Muqur recently identified the need to revitalize the Muqur District Center with increased lighting in and around the bazaar as one of the highest priorities for the community. In response, USAID's Local Governance and Community Development project supported the installation of lighting in close coordination with the District Development Assembly to ensure placement of the lights according to the community request.



A solar light recently installed in Muqur, Badghis Province.
PHOTO: USAID/LGCD

Completed on October 6, the installation of the 30 solar lights around the central bazaar has increased

safety in the area. Merchants have extended their business hours and the community has held social events. This will positively affect commerce in the region, especially during the winter season. Due to the close coordination with the District Governor, the solar light installation also built the confidence of local communities in the Afghan Government's ability to secure the area and create economic opportunities."



Professor Mirwais assists students during a building construction practicum at the Kabul University Faculty of Engineering.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

DUCATION

Engineering Professors Integrate U.S. Study
Abroad Experience into Courses: In early October,
six engineering professors from Kabul University and
Kabul Polytechnic University began integrating new
course content and teaching methodologies gained
though USAID-supported graduate certification
through the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The professors took courses in engineering and engineering management in a 2009-2010 study abroad program. They also obtained the latest textbooks and teaching materials, learned to use specialized software programs such as ArcView and MATLAB, and improved their teaching and classroom management skills. One professor said, "I wasn't using a syllabus before I went to Colorado. Now I

have a website and a syllabus for all of my courses." The professors have made other

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changes, including encouraging student participation and discussion, incorporating more laboratory and fieldwork in their courses, and using English materials in their presentations and reading assignments.

While in Boulder, the professors audited up to 10 extra classes to maximize their learning in subjects like leadership, accounting, statistics, and project management. Professors from the University of Colorado also provided their counterparts with lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations, course syllabi, textbooks, and reference materials to promote improvements in course quality and content. As a result, the professors were to begin teaching new subjects using improved methods and materials within a few months of their return home.

Women's Community Engagement and Leadership Program at Kabul University: With USAID support, the National Women's Dormitory at Kabul University is preparing to launch civic education and civic participation-based activities that develop the leadership capabilities and community engagement of its residents. The program furthers the strategic goals of the national higher education strategy by encouraging young women to be active, responsible and engaged citizens in developing a modern and democratic Afghanistan. Since the dormitory houses more than 1,000 female students from Afghanistan's outlying provinces, the program will reach some of the brightest, most motivated young women from throughout the country.



Student dorm committees discuss the importance of civic participation and ways to better the community through volunteering and activism.

PHOTO: USAID/TAF

In October, representatives from the student dorm committees brainstormed potential activities for the students, including creating a debate club or a monthly magazine highlighting student writing, poetry, and discussion of current events. After the meeting, Suryay, a senior science major, stated, "The leadership program in particular is the most interesting program for us, as this can build our capacities to overcome more challenges in our future life."

Interactive Job Website Links Employers and Skilled Graduates: USAID recently assisted the Afghanistan Technical Vocational Institute (ATVI), a two-year coeducational program, with an innovative website redesign. With new, interactive features to link students and employers, the website now allows students to search and apply for jobs, upload resumes, create personal profiles, and view fact sheets on employers. The site gives companies the ability to locate qualified technicians in the critical sectors of agriculture/horticulture, construction, information and communications technology, and

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automotive mechanics. It also allows potential employers to search through profiles and resumes from ATVI's pool of graduates.

A female student from the construction department was pleased with the opportunity to connect with employers. She explained, "The new website with a secure login will be very good for me to apply for my desired post." A male business management student was impressed with the personalized features, noting, "The website is quite exciting and user-friendly, and has interactive pages to make my own profile."



Students learn how to upload their resumes and build profiles.

PHOTO: USAID/STAY+



Minister of Mines Wahidullah Shahrani speaks at the Afghanistan Investment Forum. PHOTO: Ian Wagreich/© U.S. Chamber of

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Afghanistan Mining Investment Conference
Sparks Interest: Afghanistan is a country rich in
minerals and natural resources, including copper, iron
ore, coal, and natural gas. Situated near some of the
largest and fastest growing markets in the world,
Afghanistan's mineral and natural resources are of
high strategic and economic importance to the
country, offering unique opportunities for international
investors in the mining and extractive industry sectors.

On September 29, Minister of Mines Wahidullah Shahrani, Minister of Finance Omar Zakhilwal, and Noorullah Delawari, CEO of the Afghanistan

Investment Support Agency (AISA) participated in the Afghanistan Mining Investment and Business Opportunity Conference in New York City. Hosted by USAID, the conference promoted investment opportunities in Afghanistan's mining sector, and enabled the Ministry of Mines (MoM) to develop business relationships with mining companies and collect information on potential investors for future minerals and hydrocarbon projects.

More than 100 participants attended the conference, including representatives from mining companies, investment banks, various governments, and the media. The conference provided up-to-date information about Afghan mining development opportunities, as well as specific details relating to the upcoming public tender for the Hajigak iron ore deposit, one of the largest unexploited iron ore deposits in Asia. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) has recently introduced significant anti-corruption measures and reforms to its legal and regulatory framework, designed to facilitate private sector investment and development of its mineral sector in an open and transparent manner, based on

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internationally recognized best practices. Presenters emphasized the GIRoA's commitment to working with potential investors to extend political and legislative support for business investments in Afghanistan. The success of the conference is promising for generating investment in the mining industry in Afghanistan, and ultimately stimulating sector growth.

Through its Economic Growth and Governance Initiative, USAID assisted with the planning and facilitation of the conference, with additional support from the commercial section of the Afghanistan Embassy in the U.S., the U.S Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Department of State. Going forward, USAID will provide support to MoM to follow up on leads developed at the conference and will help facilitate the investment process for interested parties.

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Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Survey
Finalized: USAID's Trade Accession and Facilitation
for Afghanistan project recently completed its
nationwide Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)
survey on trade and customs. The KAP survey
obtained views on trade and customs from more than
1,300 Afghans in 10 provinces. The results of the
survey demonstrated that Afghans overwhelmingly
support trade, but have concerns that trade leads to
increased crime, corruption, and substandard
imported goods. Respondents indentified benefits to
the country as a result of trade in Afghanistan,
including overall economic growth, better job
opportunities, better relations with other countries,
more export of Afghan goods, access to more

imported goods, and improvements to industry and infrastructure.

TAFA's KAP Survey Sample Distribution

Sample distribution for the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices survey on trade and customs.

IMAGE: USAID/TAFA